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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 BANGKOK 001189

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E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: THAILAND COUNTRY CLEARANCE TO PARTICIPATE IN ASEAN
BUSINESS COUNCIL MEETINGS FOR: AMB. PATRICIA M. HASLACH

REF: VIENTIANE 000206

1. (U) Post warmly welcomes and grants country clearance to
Ambassador Haslach from March 6 - 8, 2006.

2. (U) Post understands that hotel and transportation are
being arranged by the U.S. ASEAN Business Council and no
Embassy assistance is required.

3. (U) Embassy point of contact is:

Colin T. Crosby
Work phone: (66-2) 205-4621
Home: (66-2) 254-3812
Cell phone: (66-1) 173-1729
Unclass E-mail Address: CROSBYCT2@State.gov

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After-hours emergency number for the Embassy is (66-2)
205-4108.

4. (U) Although visas are not required of holders of U.S.
passports (whether diplomatic, official or tourist) who plan
to stay fewer than 30 days, post nonetheless recommends that
TDY travelers, particularly those staying for a couple of
weeks or longer, obtain an official visa before coming to
Thailand. If for whatever reason the traveler has to extend
the stay, it is extremely difficult to extend a 30-day
tourist visa obtained at the airport; and fines for overstays
are costly.

5. (U) Thailand has an airport departure tax of 500 Baht
that must be paid in local currency upon departure.

6. (SBU) SECURITY INFORMATION

A. (U) MANDATORY PERSONAL SECURITY TRAINING:

- (U) All U.S. citizen personnel serving under Chief of
Mission authority in a temporary duty status of 30 days or
more must complete appropriate overseas personal security
training prior to travel (04 State 66580). Employees who
have completed the Security Overseas Seminar Course at
State's Foreign Service Institute (FSI) after June 1, 2000
meet this requirement. All other TDYers must either 1)
complete the approved four-day seminar at FSI entitled
"Serving Abroad for Families & Employees (SAFE)" or 2) have
their agency certify to the State Department Bureau of
Diplomatic Security that the employee has undergone
equivalent security training. The contact for this
certification is Assistant Director of training, DS/T, at
telephone (703) 205-2617. Country clearance will not be
granted for any traveler with planned TDY in excess of 30
days if this information is not stated/certified. POC for
additional information is DS RSOBangkok@state.gov.

B. (U) CRIME:

- (U) Crime is generally non-confrontational in nature.
Criminal acts are usually crimes of opportunity such as
purse-snatchings, thefts of unattended property, and pick
pocketing. Visitors should be especially alert in crowded
buses, streets, and markets or while on "tuk-tuks." Visitors
should lock valuables in hotel safe deposit boxes not in
their hotel rooms.

- (U) Be aware of common scams and frauds (including credit
cards, in particular). Visitors should only use credit cards
at well-established and reputable businesses. Visitors
should be careful when purchasing branded or copyrighted
goods. There are many pirated counterfeit products in the
marketplace; their purchase is against post regulations and
it is illegal to import these products into the U.S. Be wary
of common scams for jewelry, suits, silks, gems, or
antiquities. There are no Thai government-owned or sponsored
gem stores. If victimized, seek assistance from Tourist

Police by dialing 1155.

- (U) Visitors are cautioned from visiting bars involved in the sex trade. Many of these operate illegally and clients can be subject to RTG law; they often charge exorbitant drink prices and cover charges. There are also many incidents of crime against patrons in these establishments. Drugging and robbing of unwary individuals is not uncommon. There are frequent reports of victims being drugged and robbed or beaten when visiting these bars. The drugs used can cause serious temporary memory impairment, unconsciousness, and if overdosed, death.

1C. (U) TRAFFIC:

- (U) The traffic situation in Bangkok can be difficult and dangerous for both pedestrians and vehicle occupants. All visitors should be alert to traffic patterns and unexpected motorcycle drivers. Traffic drives on the left-hand side, opposite from the U.S., although there may be a bus lane that flows in the opposite direction. Pedestrians should use the overhead walkways for crossing busy streets.

1D. (SBU) TERRORISM:

- (SBU) The threat from transnational terrorist groups to the U.S. Mission in Bangkok is currently ranked high. Despite stepped up RTG efforts to monitor its borders, they remain relatively porous and allow easy illegal access. Transnational terrorist groups, including Al-Qa-ida and Jemaah Islamiyah (JI), have utilized Thailand as a transit point.

- (SBU) The threat from indigenous terrorist groups is currently rated as low. There is no evidence to indicate that indigenous terrorist groups are planning acts against U.S. personnel or facilities. The far south of Thailand has experienced incidents of criminally and politically motivated violence, including incidents attributed to armed local Muslim separatist groups. Although Americans have not been specifically targeted in the past, the indiscriminate nature of past attacks by these groups - including bombings of public places - indicates a potential threat to American citizens.

- (U) The State Department is concerned that there is an increased risk of terrorism in Southeast Asia, including Thailand. Travelers to Thailand should therefore exercise caution, especially in locations where Westerners congregate, such as clubs, discos, bars, restaurants, hotels, tourist areas, and other places frequented by foreigners.

1E. (U) OTHER SECURITY TIPS:

- (U) Visitors should avoid making any pejorative comments about any members of the Thai Royal Family or engaging in disrespectful conduct within temples or toward religious objects. Such behavior can result in arrest and/or expulsion from Thailand.

- (U) Precautions should also be taken not to discuss sensitive or classified matters outside secure environments or over unsecured and/or cellular telephones, and to securely safeguard classified or sensitive materials at the Chancery and not at hotels or residences.

- (U) Visitors should also be aware of the State Department's Consular Information Sheet for Thailand and the most recent Worldwide Caution Public Announcements, which are available via the Internet at <http://travel.state.gov>. DOD personnel must review the PACOM Force Protection Levels for Thailand found at <http://131.84.1.218/staff/at/athome.shtml>.

- (U) In essence, visitors to Bangkok must exercise appropriate caution and be alert to their surroundings with regard to their personal security. Suspicious incidents/activities should be reported to RSO Bangkok (Tel. 02-205-4000, 24 hrs/day). On behalf of U.S. Embassy Bangkok, we hope you have a safe and pleasant visit.

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